

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1 1. (Currently amended) A computer-implemented method of facilitating a
2 distributed search for a procurement request by a procurement server, the method
3 comprising:
4 receiving the procurement request from a user, wherein the procurement
5 request is subject to organizational procurement controls, and wherein the
6 procurement request involves requesting goods and/or services;
7 using the organizational procurement controls to determine if the search
8 involves a local search and/or a remote search;
9 when the search involves a local search,
10 initiating a local search of a local information source; and
11 receiving results of the local search;
12 when the search involves a remote search, the method further comprises:
13 requesting a remote supplier to conduct a remote search to satisfy
14 the procurement request, wherein the remote supplier is an external
15 supplier and/or vendor who is located outside of the organization to
16 which the user belongs, and wherein requesting the remote supplier
17 involves including information that enables the remote supplier to
18 verify the identity of the procurement server and/or the user;
19 receiving results of the remote search, wherein the verification of
20 the identity of the procurement server and/or the user enables the results of
21 the remote search to be customized for the organization to which the user

22 belongs;
23 filtering the results of the remote search by applying the
24 organizational procurement controls to the results of the remote search
25 whereby the organizational procurement controls can be applied to
26 results of the remote search which is performed by the remote supplier;
27 masking the sources of information in the remote search result to
28 prevent the user from purchasing from the remote supplier; and
29 merging the results of the remote search, when the remote search is
30 initiated, with the results of the local search, when the local search is
31 initiated; and presenting said merged search results to the user.

1 2. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 filtering said remote search results with a set of local rules.

1 3. (Original) The method of claim 2, wherein said filtering comprises
2 editing said remote search results according to a set of rules regarding information
3 that may be presented to the user.

1 4. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 selecting said remote information source from multiple information
3 sources.

1 5. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said remote search is
2 conducted without the user being connected to the remote information source.

1 6. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the remote
2 information source employs a user interface different from the user interface
3 employed by the local information source.

1 7-8 (Canceled).

1 9. (Previously presented) The method of claim 30, wherein said context
2 comprises an identity of the user.

1 10. (Previously presented) The method of claim 30, wherein said context
2 comprises an identity of an organization operating the local information source.

1 11. (Previously presented) The method of claim 30, wherein said context
2 comprises a language.

1 12 (Canceled).

1 13. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein said remote search and said
2 local search are performed at least partially in parallel.

1 14. (Currently amended) A computer readable storage medium storing
2 instructions that, when executed by a computer, cause the computer to perform a
3 computer-implemented method for facilitating a distributed search for a
4 procurement request by a procurement server, the method comprising:
5 receiving the procurement request from a user, wherein the procurement
6 request is subject to organizational procurement controls, and wherein the
7 procurement request involves requesting goods and/or services;
8 using the organizational procurement controls to determine if the search
9 involves a local search and/or a remote search;
10 when the search involves a local search,
11 initiating a local search of a local information source; and
12 receiving results of the local search;

when the search involves a remote search, the method further comprises:

- requesting a remote supplier to conduct a remote search to satisfy the procurement request, wherein the remote supplier is an external supplier and/or vendor who is located outside of the organization to which the user belongs, and wherein requesting the remote supplier involves including information that enables the remote supplier to verify the identity of the procurement server and/or the user;
- receiving results of the remote search, wherein the verification of the identity of the procurement server and/or user enables the results of the remote search to be customized for the organization to which the user belongs;
- filtering the results of the remote search by applying the organizational procurement controls to the results of the remote search whereby the organizational procurement controls can be applied to results of the remote search which is performed by the remote supplier;
- masking the sources of information in the remote search result to prevent the user from purchasing from the remote supplier; and
- merging the filtered results of the remote search, when the remote search is initiated, with the results of the local search, when the local search is initiated; and presenting said merged search results to the user.

15. (Currently amended) A method of conducting a distributed electronic search for a procurement request by a procurement server, concerning a desired procurement item, wherein the procurement request is subject to organizational procurement controls, and wherein the procurement request involves requesting goods and/or services, the method comprising:

- receiving from a user a description of an item the user desires to procure;

7 using the organizational procurement controls to determine if the search
8 involves a first search and/or a second search;
9 when the search involves a first search, the method further comprises:
10 issuing a request to a remote supplier to conduct a first search for
11 items matching said description, without the user connecting to the
12 remote procurement information source, wherein the remote supplier is
13 an external supplier and/or vendor who is located outside of the
14 organization to which the user belongs, and wherein requesting the
15 remote supplier involves including information that enables the remote
16 supplier to verify the identity of the procurement server and/or the user;
17 when the search involves a second search,
18 performing a second search of a local procurement system for
19 items matching said description; and
20 receiving results of the second search;
21 receiving a first set of results responsive to said first search, wherein the
22 verification of the identity of the procurement server and/or user enables the
23 results of the first search to be customized for the organization to which the user
24 belongs;
25 filtering said first set of results by applying the organizational procurement
26 controls to the first set of results of the remote search, whereby the organizational
27 procurement controls can be applied to the first set of results of the remote search
28 which is performed by the remote supplier;
29 masking the sources of information in the first set of search results to
30 prevent the user from purchasing from the remote supplier; and
31 presenting to the user, through a single interface, said filtered first set of
32 results, when the said first search is involved, and the second set of results
33 responsive to said second search, when the said second search is involved.

1 16. (Original) The method of claim 15, further comprising:
2 authenticating one or more of the user and the local procurement
3 information system to the remote procurement information source.

1 17. (Original) The method of claim 15, further comprising:
2 selecting the remote procurement information source from a set of
3 procurement information sources.

1 18. (Canceled).

1 19. (Original) The method of claim 15, wherein said filtering comprises
2 removing from said first set of results any items that violate the procurement
3 rules.

1 20. (Original) The method of claim 19, wherein the procurement rules are
2 designed to restrict items that may be procured by the user.

1 21. (Original) The method of claim 15, wherein said first search and said
2 second search are performed at least partially in parallel.

1 22. (Currently amended) A computer readable storage medium storing
2 instructions that, when executed by a computer, cause the computer to perform a
3 method for conducting a distributed electronic search for a procurement request,
4 the method comprising:

5 receiving from a user a description of an item the user desires to procure;
6 using organizational procurement controls to determine if the search
7 involves a first search and/or a second search;
8 when the search involves a first search, the method further comprises:

9 issuing a request to a remote supplier to conduct a first search for
10 items matching said description, without the user connecting to the
11 remote procurement information source, wherein the remote supplier is
12 an external supplier and/or vendor who is located outside of the
13 organization to which the user belongs, and wherein requesting the
14 remote supplier involves including information that enables the remote
15 supplier to verify the identity of the procurement server and/or the user;
16 receiving a first set of results responsive to said first search,
17 wherein the verification of the identity of the procurement server and/or
18 user enables the first set of results responsive to the first search to be
19 customized for the organization to which the user belongs;
20 masking the sources of information in the remote search result to
21 prevent the user from purchasing from the remote supplier; and
22 filtering said first set of results by applying the organizational
23 procurement controls to the first set of results of the remote search
24 whereby the organizational procurement controls can be applied to the
25 first set of results of the remote search which is performed by the
26 remote supplier;
27 when the search involves a second search,
28 performing a second search of a local procurement system for
29 items matching said description; and
30 receiving results of the second search;
31 and
32 presenting to the user, through a single interface, said filtered first set of
33 results, when the first search is involved, and the second set of results responsive
34 to said second search, when the second search is involved.

1 23. (Currently amended) A system for facilitating a distributed search for
2 information for a procurement request by a procurement server, comprising:
3 a determination mechanism using organizational procurement controls
4 configured to determine if the search involves a local search and/or a remote
5 search;
6 a local information source configured to use the results of the
7 determination mechanism and, when the search involves a local search, provide
8 information to local users in an organization through a first user interface;
9 a communication module configured to use the results of determination
10 mechanism, and, when the search involves a remote search, enable said local
11 information source to communicate with a remote supplier, wherein the remote
12 supplier is configured to provide information to users through a second user
13 interface different from the first user interface, and wherein the remote supplier is
14 an external supplier and/or vendor who is located outside of the organization to
15 which the user belongs, and wherein communicating with the remote supplier
16 involves including information that enables the remote supplier to verify the
17 identity of the procurement server and/or the users;
18 a set of rules regarding information that may be displayed to a first local
19 user; and
20 a processor configured to initiate, in response to a request from the first
21 local user:
22 a remote search of the remote information source, when the search
23 involves a remote search, wherein the verification of the identity of the
24 procurement server and/or user enables the results of the remote search to be
25 customized for the organization to which the user belongs; and
26 a local search of said local information source, when the search involves a
27 local search;

28 wherein the sources of information in the remote search result are masked
29 | to prevent the user from purchasing from the remote supplier; and
30 wherein results of said remote search are filtered by applying the
31 organizational procurement controls to the results of the remote search, whereby
32 the organizational procurement controls can be applied to results of the remote
33 search which is performed by the remote supplier, when the remote search is
34 involved, and then merged with results of said local search, when the local search
35 is involved, for display to the first local user through the first user interface.

1 24. (Original) The system of claim 23, further comprising:
2 authentication means for authenticating one or more of the system and the
3 first local user to the remote information source.

1 25. (Original) The system of claim 23, wherein said remote search and
2 said local search are performed in parallel.

1 26. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the
2 organizational procurement controls include at least one of, an upper limit on a
3 price, an upper limit on a quantity, a prohibition against a given supplier, a limit to
4 a given brand, a limit to a given model, a limit on a delivery option, and a limit on
5 payment terms.

1 27. (Previously presented) The method of claim 15, wherein the
2 organizational procurement controls include at least one of, an upper limit on a
3 price, an upper limit on a quantity, a prohibition against a given supplier, a limit to
4 a given brand, a limit to a given model, a limit on a delivery option, and a limit on
5 payment terms.

1 28. (Previously presented) The system of claim 23, wherein the
2 organizational procurement controls include at least one of, an upper limit on a
3 price, an upper limit on a quantity, a prohibition against a given supplier, a limit to
4 a given brand, a limit to a given model, a limit on a delivery option, and a limit on
5 payment terms.

1 29. (Previously presented) The method of claim 6, wherein said presenting
2 comprises displaying said merged search results with the user interface employed
3 by the local information source.

1 30. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said requesting
2 a remote supplier comprises identifying to the remote information source a
3 context in which to execute the remote search.

1 31. (Previously presented) The method of claim 15, wherein said issuing
2 comprises providing the remote procurement information source with information
3 for identifying a context in which to execute the requested search.